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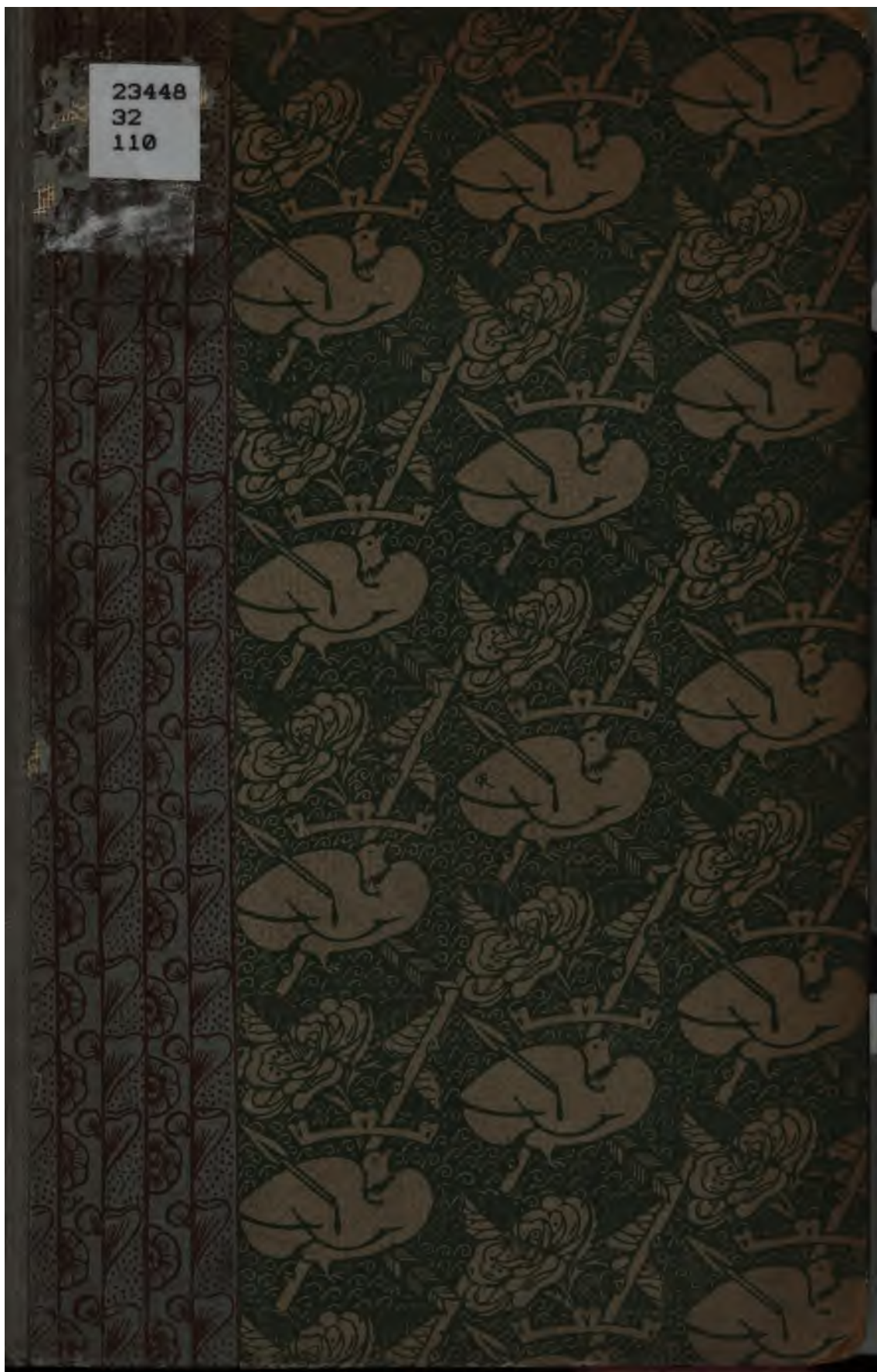
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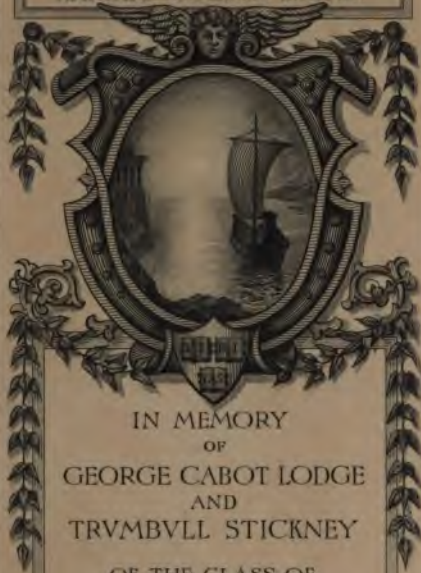
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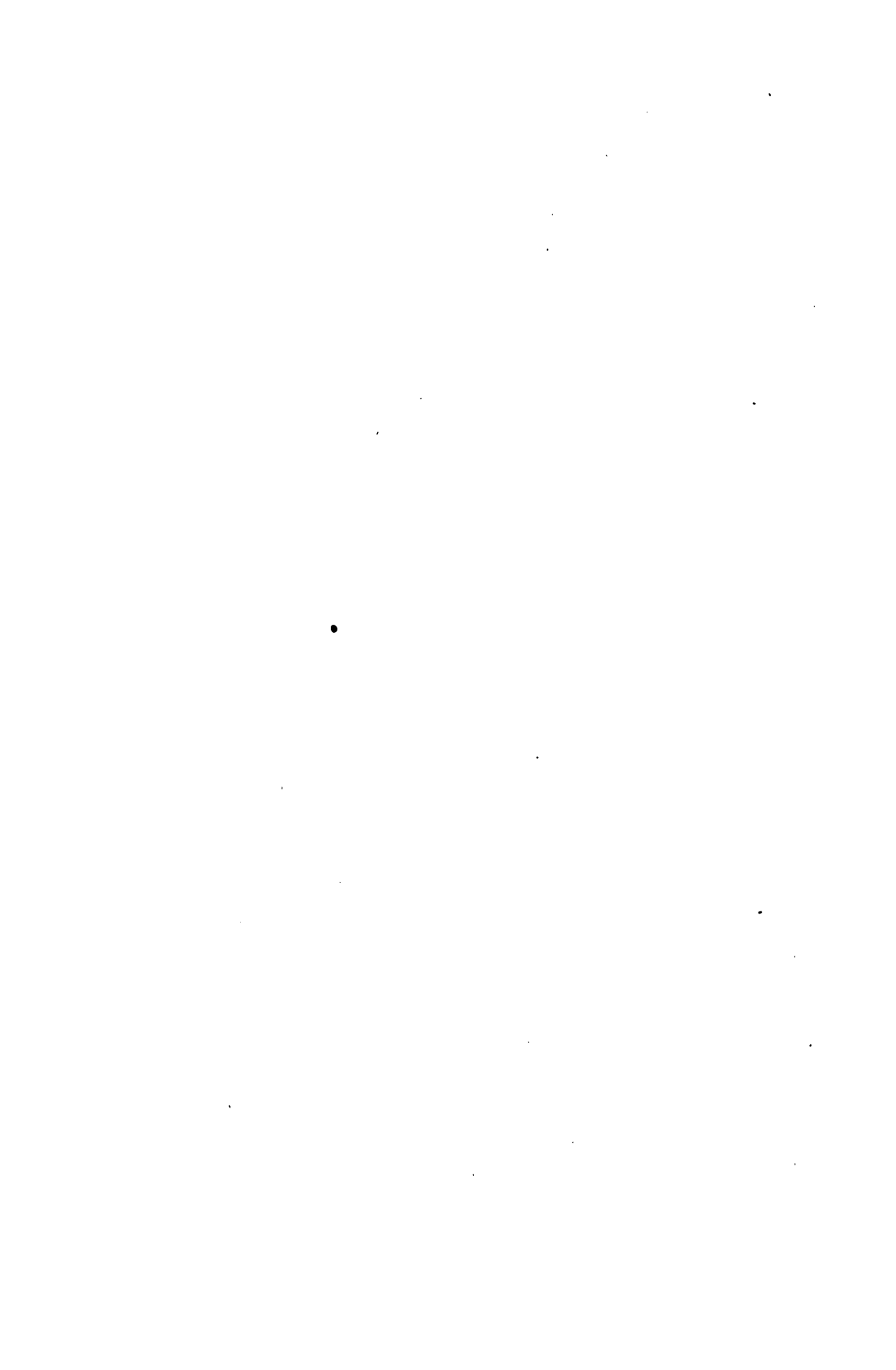


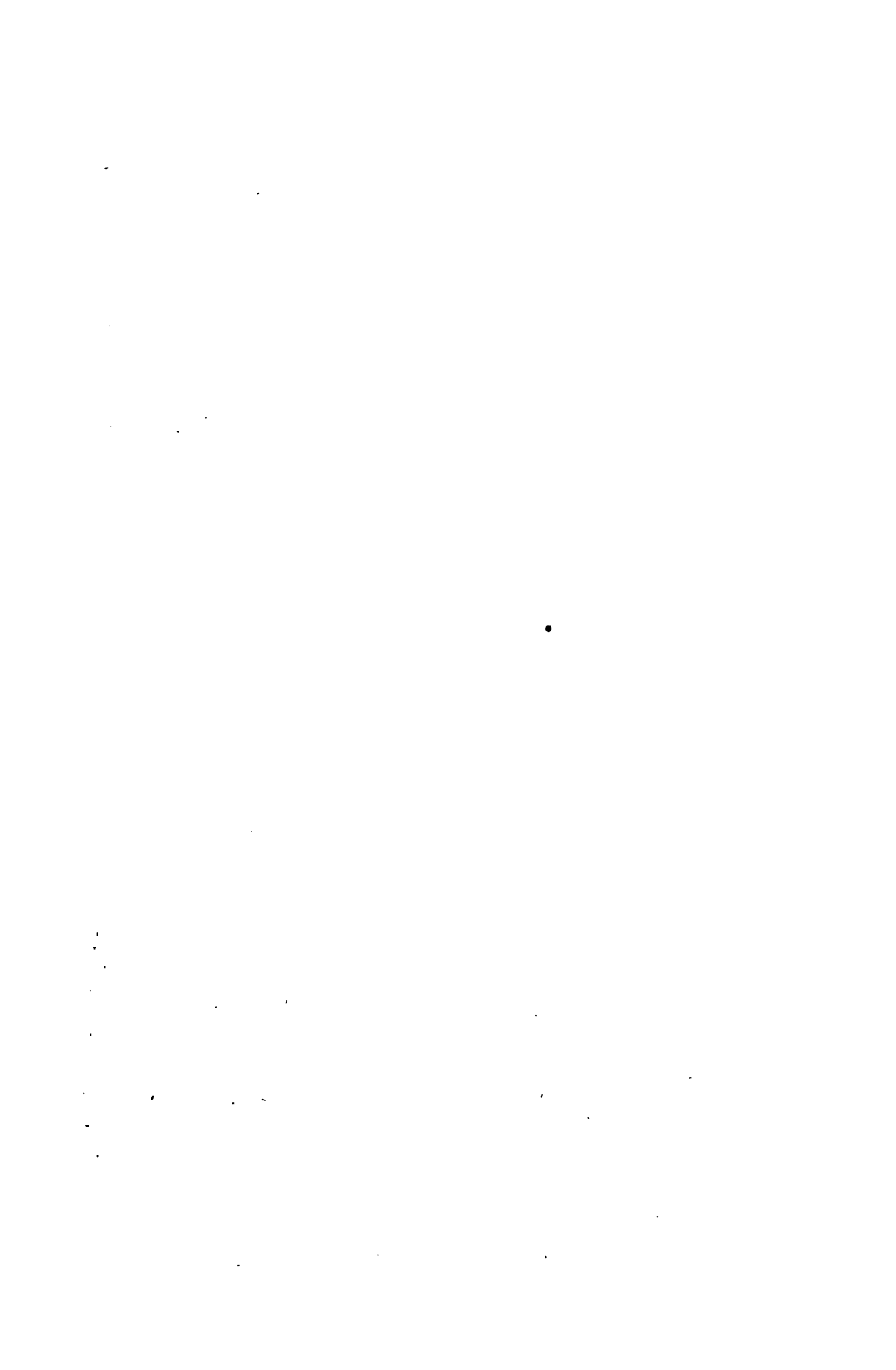
IN MEMORY
OF
GEORGE CABOT LODGE
AND
TRUMBULL STICKNEY
OF THE CLASS OF
1895

WELLS



121





FAIR ROSAMUND
BY
MICHAEL FIELD

Catherine Bradley

London
1847

23448.32.110

✓ **DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.**

HENRY, King of England.

SIR WILFRED DE LACY, a knight.

SIR JOSE DE LACY, brother to Sir Wilfred.

SIR TOPAZ, an old knight.

MAVIS, an architect.

MICHAEL, Keeper of the King's forest.

ELINOR, Queen of England.

ROSAMUND, foster-daughter to Michael.

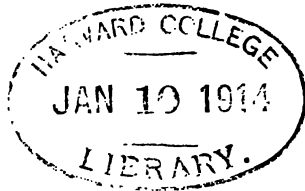
MARGERY, foster-sister to Rosamund.

BEATRIX, betrothed to Sir Wilfred.

ELLEN GREENE, a witch.

Masons, Courtiers.

♣ **SCENE.**—At Woodstock and Winchester.



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11

PROLOGUE
CHORUS



S TOILING Hercules
forced Hell's grim door,
And viewed the nether mys-
teries of fate;
So doth the buskin'd Muse
of tragic lore
Burst through the ancient,
adamantine gate

That gives to night the secrets of the past.
Listen! She opens rounded mouth to tell
A thing, unguessed before, revealed at last :
She whom our first Plantagenet too well
Loved, and for whom he built the marble maze,
Was no rich, crimson beauty of old line,
As fabled in proud histories and lays;
No Clifford, as 'tis boasted; but, in fine,
A girl o' the country, delicately made
Of blushes and simplicity and pure
Free ardour, of her sweetness unafraid;
For **Rosa Mundi**, of this truth be sure,
Was nature's Rose, not man's: as ye shall see
In this sad tale of lover's destiny.

ACT
I

Scene I

Woodstock: masons raising the Labyrinth ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
Enter at a distance King Henry,
Sir Topaz, and Mavis ♪ ♪ ♪

♪ Ist MASON ♪

 ONDER
IS
THE
KING.

♪ IInd MASON ♪
He's saged of late.
♪ Ist MASON ♪
Ay, ay! about the face;
his fiery hair
Is dimmed as if by smoke;
his eyes are hollow,
Yet is he stout in body;
well-nigh young.

IInd MASON.

Some note he stoops a little i' the back
Since he was whipped in church.

Ist MASON.

Dare-devil, peace!

He's straight enough; it is the monks that squint.

IInd MASON.

Mum, mum!

Ist MASON.

Why, wherefore?

IInd MASON.

'Cause the sun's come out

That wakens us to labour in the glance

Of Master Mavis' eye.

KING HENRY.

Good Architect,

Thou hast a spider's entrails for thy brain,

To spin me such a web.

MAVIS.

My noble liege,

Upon that Cretan wonder did I think,

That held the misbegotten Minotaur,

Until—so worked my fancy on its shape—

Abortive circles built I airily,

Founding the hoary walls as in a dream,

And from their vistas saw the ribboned sky

Blue as the fillets of a troop of girls.

'Twas magic certainty directed me

To the mid-chamber, straight as arrow takes

The eye o' the target; and conception stood

Above my dreams, their secret throughly solved.

SIR TOPAZ.

I take it, Master Mavis, that you are what they
call a genius, for your talk is warm as a summer's day.

vi

MAVIS.

I spoke too freely. Pardon, gracious sire.

SIR TOPAZ.

Now I do believe I've touched some quick, and given some un conjecturable pain. On my faith, good fellow, I know not what I have done. Pardy, I'm grieved to the heart if I offended. And 'tis so fair a building—a very rose—you've carved on the ground.

KING HENRY.

A—what?

SIR TOPAZ.

So many curves, circular and broken, I said, sire, the building was in that respect like a rose.

KING HENRY.

Oh, ay! the garden rose, our cultured rose,
That's folded up in crimson like a queen.

Ay, ay! Then, Master Mavis, I would know
How many days before your labours end?

MAVIS.

Five, gracious liege, if every sinew work
From dawn to midnight, spite of curfew's toll
Above the hooded forest; on such terms
Will incomplection yield.

KING HENRY.

And such we grant,
Though hard upon your craftsmen and yourself.

MAVIS.

No; for my toil has flushed Time's languid cheek.

KING HENRY.

Necessity is on her knees to us
That we should use you harshly.

MAVIS.

Be it so.

KING HENRY.

I'd have you mark yon varlets! Make them skip
With energy of blows, and never spare!
Each moment is my prey the dogs should seize;
I will not brook the loss: their lives are forfeit
If they should fail to wreathe my labyrinth—
MAVIS.

Within five days—even to the silken clew.

♫ (Moves towards the masons.)

KING HENRY.

Sir Topaz. . . .

SIR TOPAZ.

Sire.

KING HENRY.

I think you never married?

SIR TOPAZ.

Nay. Nor have I within me that which could be
quicken'd into the desire.

KING HENRY.

So proof against the arrow-headed pangs?

SIR TOPAZ.

'Tis thus. The woman-child died I loved as a
lad, and my love never grew after. 'Tis a little thing
of her size.

KING HENRY.

Oh! then you know Love's root as well as flower;
The hidden cords that darkling bind the heart
With hungry vehemence and never loose.

Oh! they may pluck and smell the joyful red
Of golden-scented blossom, call it love;
But there are fibres down, down in the depths,
That never shall be moved, by which it lives.

SIR TOPAZ.

Constancy. . . .

KING HENRY.

I did not speak of that, I spoke of love
When planted in the red soil of the heart;
Of its insatiate girth; of Rosamund,
And how she's everywhere about my soul.
I think I told you once how first we met.
She gathered cherry-blossoms, and I bent
The bough to her; when, lo!—just where they
bunched

Whitest—there hid a little hand more white;
I kissed it, and her upturned face grew white
To swooning, and the breath stood at her lips.
I longed to be a soul from Holy Land,
With shrift won at the Holy Sepulchre;
To touch her flesh made me a penitent;
The pressure of that kissing broke the seal
To all the wine that filled the stony jar
Of my unused past. To her I was
No king of men—only the great Lord Love,
To whom she gave, as she were born to it,
Unthinking loyalty. I've never known
Such homage, only sullen tolerance
And darkest-featured hate.

SIR TOPAZ.

My dear liege, you have ever made light of your
griefs.

KING HENRY.

Because I was a loveless man and blind.
Vain, flippant men have tied round Cupid's eyes
The badge of their own shame; his heavenly orbs
See fairest things where others scarce see fair,
Behold in darkness sooty hells more deep.

SIR TOPAZ.

Sire, these words afflict me beyond speech Is

there any service you can put me to, aught you can trust to an old man's care?

KING HENRY.

Yes, yes; my love, the bright gold of my heart,
Be thou its treasurer, be that which I
Would give my life to be.

SIR TOPAZ.

Warden of the labyrinth and guardian of the lady! With joy, and in all fidelity.

KING HENRY.

'Tis well; I shall remember. But to give
This charge unto another is as hard
As to pull life and arrow from the breast.
O honest Topaz, as complete my trust
In thee as is my perfect love to her:
Full well I know thou'lt dragon all my wealth,
That none shall be enriched.

Yet solitude

May gyve thy days as iron. Will it? Speak!

SIR TOPAZ.

Oh, I'll marry seclusion for the sake of getting famous progeny—meditation, peace.

KING HENRY.

Why should I ask? Was it a country lass?

SIR TOPAZ.

What lass?

KING HENRY.

She thou didst love?

SIR TOPAZ.

Ay, ay!

KING HENRY.

So long ago! and after all at peace!

Scene II.

Woodstock by the Forester's hut. 
Enter Rosamund & Margery. 

MARGERY.

'TIS wonderful to see 'em dance. . . .

ROSAMUND.

And strange

That I may never see an elf, although
I roam at evening underneath the trees,
And love their crumpled gloom.

MARGERY.

Oh, you should see!

ROSAMUND.

Ah, if I could. What is it in thine eyes?
Why, 'tis their magic black, the naughty gloom
Beloved of goblins.

MARGERY.

You are blue, and safe!

ROSAMUND.

Safe from enchantment?—yes, or nearly so.

I never see the fairies.

MARGERY.

Secretly

You take that light green path—I've seen you
there—

An' look behind you; an' I laughed and thought,
"She thinks none sees the elves dance but herself."

I've watched for you, as weasel from its hole,

Behind the mossy wall, an' dare not speak,

You came along so new and wonderful.

It must have been the elves.

ROSAMUND.

Go, Margery;

The fire is low, 'tis father's supper-time!

MARGERY.

He likes you best to wait on him.

ROSAMUND.

Peace! go!

♪ (Exit Margery within.)

Why am I fretful? . . . and my father turned
Last night when we were standing by the door—
We always settle in the sunset so,
And do not speak—last night he turned and went
Into the house, as I had not been there.
My heart stood still to hear him go. The old—
Henry!—when lonely must be very lone;
They sit and watch so patient by the fire,
And there is none to come to them save death.
I'll back directly, for I love him more
Not less, though I'm so hard, with better love,
Bright coin—the king's face shining on it clear—
Not the worn pieces. Yonder is the beech!
I play sometimes when I have long to wait
Wi' the tiny urns, and say they hold my tears.

♪ (Exit behind the trees.)

♪ (Enter Wilfred.)

WILFRED.

This must be the hut—the nest of sticks where is
found the King's dove. Ha, ha! famously said. But
I saw him, like a hawk, and his pigeon can't escape.
I spied him, and t'will make my fortune with the
Queen. Down in the midst of the trees he toyed with
her and kissed her—pat!—as I looked. Ha! ha! I saw
but little of that joust of lips, the crimson couples til-
ted too far off; yet I was witness, and my fortune's
made. I'll knock, and use my eyes.

♪ (Knocks.)

♪ (Enter Margery from within.)

Fair damsel, pardon me; such sudden light
Is dazzling—

MARGERY.

Please you enter, sir; the sun
Shines till one cannot bear it on the face.
It's dark inside.

WILFRED.

The blessed simpleton!
What eyes!—to stir one's blood—and shapely
cheek,

As brown and red and dimpled as an apple.
We'll have an hour together in the wood.

♪ (aloud) Your father is within!

MARGERY.

He's late to-night.

WILFRED.

Has he a fair, young dog?

MARGERY.

Our Blanche has pups.

I play with them.

WILFRED.

No other playfellows!

MARGERY.

What, have you guessed?—the fairies!

WILFRED.

On my soul!

You dance with them? But tell me where they
break

The ring to let you in to be their queen—

Ay!

MARGERY.

By the beeches.

WILFRED.

Where the old wall lies

Half ruined?
MARGERY.

Yes.

WILFRED.

At this end or at that?

MARGERY.

Right yonder, sir, within the elder-brake.
You'd never see 'em dance, for they are shy,
Although such friends with me that I am sewing
A little cap for each—your colour, red.

WILFRED.

My plume is red, but this is iron mail:
I'll let you handle it.—Ah! who comes here?
Who's that?

♫ (Re-enter Rosamund.)

MARGERY.

My sister—and so beautiful,
You'll like to see her.

WILFRED.

Little hypocrite!

You've got too bright an eye to wish it matched.

♫ (aside) Oh! but she's beautiful, and yet withal
Too self-sufficient; one of nature's prudes,
Who wrap their beauty round them as a cloak,
Nor wave it as a veil. This browner girl
Is nature's very wanton—will be mine.

♫ (aloud) Good even. Shall I say it is mischance
Compels me speak of business that would be
Of interest to your father, though to you
Indifferent—or heaven's peculiar grace
That gives me vision of two lovely maids
Who came to choose a setter?—for I've heard
Your father breeds such.

ROSAMUND.

It is accident.

I'm sorry father's out. Yet since I come
To lay his supper, I can give you hope
You have not journeyed bootless. Sit, sir knight!

MARGERY ♪ (aside).

Sir knight!

WILFRED.

Nay, rather kneel—thus.

ROSAMUND.

Compliments

Are here ill-breeding. We are simple folk,
And I am no court-lady.

MARGERY.

Rosamund!

But very pretty.

WILFRED.

Ladies! Name them not;

There is not one to match you. Why, the heave
Of your green vesture sets desire to think
On the globing water-lilies underneath
Their buds' enthalment; while my city dames
Trick the round swell with gauds and broidery
Befooling eager gaze—

ROSAMUND.

I'm maiden, sir,

As well as no court-lady.

WILFRED.

I'll affect

Clownishness, if it please you. I will watch
Yon forester till I am churl in full.

♪ (Enter Michael.)

MICHAEL.

Ay, ay! how now, wench!

xv

ROSAMUND.

Father! . . .

WILFRED ♫ (aside.)

Why, her eyes

Flash to him as the lightning to a stump;
And yet she is the minion of a king!

MICHAEL.

What does this fellow here?

MARGERY.

He wants a dog.

He's a sir knight.

MICHAEL.

Ay, ay! the least of the pups;

He shall not have the brown one with a star.

WILFRED.

Old man, I'd see your dogs—for such you breed,
The country-side allows, as none beside.

MICHAEL.

Your honour's servant and King Henry's slave.

WILFRED.

'Tis for the Queen.

MICHAEL.

Her humble slave. I've got

Some few behind the hatch.

WILFRED.

I'll come. You've bred

The fairest daughters of the country-side.

MICHAEL.

Oh, ah! the brownie's mine. It was a wench

Like nuts I wedded, an' so full of prayers

I always had my luck. The comely one—

Why, she's my fosterling: her father, sir,

A man-at-arms: her mother! never saw

So fine a woman—just as red and white

xvi

As any lady born. I'll ask you, sir,
To step behind. An' girls, for shame, go in!
♫ (Exeunt Sir Wilfred and Michael.)

ROSAMUND.

Come, Margery!

MARGERY.

I cannot come. I'll creep

Behind 'em.

ROSAMUND.

No; it is not maidenly

To be so free with strangers.

MARGERY.

What a man!

With such big, ugly cheeks, like father's bull;
And did you see his great, damp curls and eyes,
Such eyes that roll about you?

ROSAMUND.

Margery,

He is a wicked man: you must not speak

About his face.

MARGERY.

He's nasty; but he talks

As kind as can be for a gentleman.

ROSAMUND ♫ (aside.)

O Henry!

♫ (aloud) They are coming back. We'll go.

♫ (Exeunt Rosamund and Margery.)

Scene III.

✠ Winchester: a room within the Palace. ✠
Enter Queen Elinor and the Princes Henry and Richard. ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠

QUEEN ELINOR.

✠ UPON the yellow ground of Africa
Young lions tear each other; so these sons,
Whom I, above all women in my pride,
May proudly claim my offspring, wage a strife
Each against each. I care not. 'Tis the blood
Insurgent of their equal parentage.

PRINCE HENRY ✠ (to Richard.)

God's death! You will defy me to my face,
Deny my birthright and my crown's right too,
Because, forsooth, we're brothers—you who
crawled

Behind me into light, who took the path
Which I discovered, in that very act
Sealing yourself my follower—bound to keep
A year's step lower in the court of time;
You to whose brow no golden circle gave
Its pledge of royalty; you, you, to brag!

QUEEN ELINOR.

Urged like my own young monarch.

PRINCE RICHARD.

Glorious fool,
That cannot match a thunderstorm in noise
For all your clapping lungs! I'll sing them still.
My blood is wine that ran from the same press
As your bright liquor; and the vessel!—see,
I'm broad and tall as you! Ay, mother?

QUEEN ELINOR.

Yes,

My thumb's nail taller.

PRINCE HENRY.

I will turn the edge
Of your own sword against you, as I live.
In Aquitaine
Bertram de Born, the troubadour, is mad
Beneath your scorpion-rule. I'll use his rage—
But by the Holy Heart, no further threats,
No comets of my passion: thou shalt know
Destruction, and remember how they flared.
I'll to De Born.

PRINCE RICHARD.

And I to Aquitaine.

PRINCE HENRY ♪ (shaking his fist.)

My sign of parting.

PRINCE RICHARD.

Mine!

QUEEN ELINOR.

Now here's a cheek

For each, and kiss me both together, so!
My mouth is herald 'tween the lips arrayed
In double line of battle on each side.
Farewell, farewell! Thank God you have repaid
My flesh and blood in you with usury.

PRINCE HENRY.

I'll force his homage.

PRINCE RICHARD.

I'll bring down his pride.

QUEEN ELINOR.

They feed my heart! ♪ (Exeunt severally.)

♪ (Enter Beatrix.)

BEATRIX.

Your majesty.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Oh pray

For motherhood; it is the golden thread
On which are strung the ages!
BEATRIX.

Gracious Queen!

QUEEN ELINOR.

Time works within our wombs as, in the depths
Of earth, the miner. There are found the gems
He wears before the light, and there the dross
That makes the dull pile of oblivion.

Well!

BEATRIX.

I am bidden ask your instant leave
To hear De Lacy speak—

QUEEN ELINOR.

You velvet moth,
Of you! I will not listen to his suit;
He only lures with flame to drown in oil
Of dull neglect. Man's lamp of love is set
Ever to such low issues.

BEATRIX.

Not of me,

Of matter fitting but your private ear
He chafes to speak. My dearest sovereign, you
Should hold so stout a liegeman in regard;
Your service is his very stuff of life,
And yarn of all his time. He would be nothing
Without your favour. The King loves him not.

QUEEN ELINOR.

The King loves none.

BEATRIX.

I fear he's deep in love.

QUEEN ELINOR.

The King in love! It was my hope that morn
You rode the spotted palfrey, I the grey—

My bridegroom with the bright half-rubied hair—
Woman, you must remember how we saw
Our lover on the knoll, above the bend
O' the road, ere he was 'ware of us. Ah me!
You bring me news my Henry is in love?
His youngest lad is in his teens—in love?
BEATRIX.

Sir Wilfred—

QUEEN ELINOR.

Call him here! He has a throat

♪ (Exit Beatrix)

That's loud, and shame must have a trumpeter,
Or never march at all.

♪ (Re-enter Beatrix with Sir Wilfred.)

♪ (To Sir Wilfred.) The King's in love—
With you or me?

SIR WILFRED.

Nay, 'tis a snooded girl
Down i' the country, coloured like a rose.
I burn as hell to speak it—how they kissed
And hung together.

BEATRIX.

Mercy!

SIR WILFRED.

In a wood

He pressed her to his heart with panting voice
That out-ran language.

BEATRIX.

And the little wretch!

SIR WILFRED.

Was eager as a devil.

BEATRIX.

Fie, I'm sick

Of horror and disgust.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Thank God for boys!
To have reared a treasonous brood from his own
blood,
To have it at my call! 'Tis a fierce pup
My first; he'll fasten where I bid, relax
When Death or I cry, Loose. Oh, I am glad
To have the record of those ancient moods
In my boys' faces. That first ecstasy
Of anger, then the weak drift of despair
In puling Godfrey. From a fire of tears
Leapt out my Lion-heart!
When I again conceived my flesh was cold,
I bred a coward!

♪ (To Sir Wilfred.)

Join hands! . . . My Beatrix,
I toss her, a bright posy from my breast,
The day, the very hour, I've smoothed her limbs,
This . . . Let me loose on her! . . . I cannot wait.
Speak fast! Direct me! I have sown i' my sons
The whirlwind of my nature; he will reap!
This doe of the forest, my peculiar prey,
With silver-arrow'd death she must be pierced;
The wrongèd Dian must behold her bleed!
I have not shared the King's love o' the chase;
It 'gins to stir in me.

♪ (Enter King Henry.)

My lord, these twain
Have kept me all the morning with their loves.
Will you not bless them?

KING HENRY.

Love alone can bless,
Not kings. Sir knight,
Be merry! Of twain studies one must be
xxiii

For ease, one for attainment. You'll pass days
Too strenuous at task with life and love:
Love therefore as a pastime, this fair dame
Your mistress of the revels. Joy to each!

♫ (Exeunt Beatrix & Sir Wilfred.)

QUEEN ELINOR.

A pastime! From experience you speak!

KING HENRY.

I never have concerned myself with love.

Where's John?

QUEEN ELINOR.

Why, with his retinue of fools.

'Tis best to set an ape before base things,

Since whatso'er he sees must fall a prey

To the antics of his visage. Do you need

One to make mock of majesty?

KING HENRY.

The boy,

Where is he? Tell me where? O Elinor,

Consider; you have Henry, the young king,

To dote on: grant this favour to mine age,

Let be our youngest boy, leave the soft wax

Of his heart unimpressed by your virulence.

He calls me "father," and I bear an old

Usurper's aspect to your fiery three.

Plant not your poison in him!

QUEEN ELINOR.

With my milk

He sucked it. The soft-browed, deceptive lad,

You munch with kissing, dogs his brothers' heels

And licks allegiance to them. You're disgraced

Suing for love as humbly on your knees

As once for pardon at your Becket's tomb.

A piteous whine!—"Love me, my little son,

xxiv

Or my heart will burst"—a sorry spectacle!
I have a king to dote on, a young king!
I tell you to your face, that boy of ours,
Crowned Henry, has my love, because he has
My bridegroom's eyes; but for the rest, my lord,
You're old to think of love: when you were young
You thought not of it.
KING HENRY.

I embraced your lands,

Not you.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Plantagenet, you wronged yourself
As you had made the day and night your foe,
And roused
The violated seasons to confer
Each his peculiar catastrophe
Of death or pestilence. I'll shatter you
As nature shatters—you as impotent
As the uprooted tree to lash the earth
That flings its griping roots out to the air
And plants its burgeoned summits in the soil.
Embraced my lands! Ah, I forget myself,
The loveless are insensate to presage;
'Tis in calamity's harsh stubble-field
They learn to suffer. I'll be harvester,
And sickle your ripe joys. Embraced my lands!
Had you embraced me, I had borne you fruit
Of soft-fleshed children. Hug the progeny
Of your stony lust, and curse me! ♪ (Exit.)
KING HENRY.

She forgets,
When she is gone—dear bliss!—the thought of her
Lies not a stinking corpse about my heart.
The loved or loathed may haunt us. Who oppress

Are mortal in remembrance; having passed,
As sultry day that kept the air in bond,
They leave us breathing free. How beautiful
To have the mind a solitude for love!
Mine's clamorous as a camp—one silken tent
Close-curtained, secret. . . . Rosamund!

♪ (Enter Courtier.)

COURTIER.

A man
Would see you, sire, a haggard, bright-eyed
knave,
With rapid tongue.

KING HENRY.

I know him. Bring him in.

♪ (Exit Courtier.)

The architect!

♪ (Re-enter Courtier with Mavis.)

We would be private. Go.

♪ (Exit Courtier.)

MAVIS.

'Tis done, and this the eve of the fifth day.

KING HENRY.

Then, Mavis, come within! This very night
I'll ride with Topaz to the Oxford woods.
Come, follow! Thou dost pant; I'll give thee wine.

♪ (Exeunt within.)

And knows not it is naked. Sweet, so close,
And I can let thee fondle with my shade!
One kiss, the trembling whisper of a touch,
And we're together!

♫ (Kisses her.)

ROSAMUND.

Prison! No! there's air!

O Henry!

KING HENRY.

Love!

ROSAMUND.

You left me desolate,
And in a prison. Still mine eyes are wet
With their leave-taking tears.

KING HENRY.

What, weep to-night,
Your birthday? Rose, you are a woman now;
You love the king—how much?

ROSAMUND.

The stars must count.

KING HENRY.

You'd do me homage, Rose,
Were you the lady of broad lands; what vow
Shall I require of you who hold in fief
My heart's wide realm?

ROSAMUND.

I give you of myself
All, all there is, and for the rest, my love.

KING HENRY.

You swear me lord of all the womanhood
That Time's good sword shall win for you?

ROSAMUND.

Ay, all.

How should I know that I am girl, still more

xxviii

With this May moon-rise, woman, save for love!
KING HENRY.

The moon ♫ (wrapping her in his cloak.)
For touching this white shoulder must be banned!
Let's to the deeper woods! The nightingale!
Dost hear that urgent note, that thorny sigh,
A prick sets bliss to bleed, desire too sharp
For tolerance, a pang!
ROSAMUND.

I'm curious
To learn what happens to the nightingales
At daybreak. Henry, do their gurgling throats
Stop like a torrent when it turns to rest
Under green leaves!
KING HENRY.

In the nest all grows still.
I've built a fair bower-nest for thee, my bird,
And there we'll mate.
Come, 'tis a little deeper in the wood,
And nearer to its heart.
ROSAMUND.

I love you here
Where the beech is and the sun. I will not go
Where I have never loved you.
KING HENRY.

Ha! Not come!
Who is it orders? God, with those clasped hands
She's forging mail to keep me from her heart.
You love me in the woods!—a summer love!
You shall love me in the winter, in the world,
Where'er I will, what pain I put you to.
You shall not choose. Is this your loyalty?
And you'll not go
Where you have never loved me! In the camp,
xxix

The palace, I can find no spot of life
Where I have "never loved." Where'er I am
Is Love, the famished child you will not feed.
Come, come! Ah, Rose, you cannot know the
pain!

. . . If you'll not come,
I'll burn the bower, and ride off to the wars,
Make havoc till I perish.

ROSAMUND.

It fulfils

My dream. You shut me in a prison close:
Henry, I cannot leave you; lead me home.

♪ (Exeunt.)

MARGERY.

They've jumped the bonfire glow-worm. Here
they come!

Soft! They will dance upon my hair as moss,
And I'll not scratch my head for all their toes.

FAIRIES.

On the rooty earth
Ferns of April's birth,
Brown and closely furled,
Doze like squirrels curled
Warm and still—
While we frisk our fill.

MARGERY.

Now I can see their scrimpèd kirtles green,
And swinging beads of dew about their necks;
They've not the pretty caps o' Midsummer,
Poor midges, only cowslip-bells, o'er young,
That fall at every jerk, an' dirty cups
From acorns of last year. To-morrow eve
I'll bring 'em tiny peaked bonnets red,
And see if they will pick 'em from the twigs.

FAIRIES.

Hark! our ears have caught
Sound of breath and snort
Near our beechen-tree,
Mixing carelessly!
Sprites away!
Fly as if 'twere day! ♫ (Exeunt.)

MARGERY.

They're gone! I heard a noise! Oh, oh, oh, oh!
If it should come from underneath the yew!

♫ (Faints.)

♫ (Enter Sir Wilfred, leading his horse.)

SIR WILFRED.

By Cupid! 'tis my nut-brown maid enacts
The shrieking owl! I swore to find her here,
Watching for silly spirits of the night
That never come at all. My simpleton,
My comely, rustic fool, to be cajoled,
The pleasant way of forcing childishness.
Words be my only violence to win
A lusty, little paramour. These churls
Are hoodwinked by the language of the great.
Each finger is an icicle to touch:
I'll wrap her in my cloak, fold her in fur,
Before I speak. She's a delicious heap.
My cosset!

MARGERY ♪ (starting.) Rose, where am I?—not
in bed?

♪ (Discovering Sir Wilfred.) Oh, Oh!

SIR WILFRED.

My pretty maid, you're in my arms,
And I'm the knight to whom you told a tale
Of elfin pranks beneath the elder-trees,
Just on the stroke of midnight. So I came
To see among the fairies which is fairest,
That I may give her gems and gold and love.
I see her!

MARGERY.

Sir, . . . I think they skipt away

A moment back.

SIR WILFRED.

But one was left behind.

MARGERY.

You only see some primroses.

SIR WILFRED ♪ (aside.)

'Tis thus

We win the city harlots; but to-night
I'm ineffectual.—*M* (aloud) 'Tis melancholy
Watching for pixies dressed in flow'ry bits—
Not much to see, if seen; while in the town
Are ladies trooping all in bodices
Of scarlet, jewel-lighted, with their locks
Caught in a golden web; and there they dance
With knights unarmed.
MARGERY.

It must be brave in town!

SIR WILFRED.

This dress is poor, it wants an edge of gold;
The stuff is coarsely woven. Come to town,
And let me love you! Robes of red and white,
With golden fleur-de-lis all over them,
I'll give you, and a necklace of bright gold.

MARGERY.

It must be brave in town!

SIR WILFRED.

Oh, but it is!

Brave to be dressed in red.

MARGERY.

I have a cloak

At home; and this is my old dress.

SIR WILFRED.

Poor wench!

But you shall have a necklace of bright gold.

MARGERY.

Yes, sir, my own is just a string of eggs!

SIR WILFRED.

Kiss me!

MARGERY.

They've told me to be coy with men.

SIR WILFRED.

With foresters and peasants, not with knights;
You should do all a gentleman can ask.

MARGERY.

I'd rather not.

SIR WILFRED.

Indeed you must! Come, come!
You have not learnt respect. If you would have
A silken bodice, I must have a kiss.

MARGERY.

Silk!

SIR WILFRED.

And with spangles too.—My bait has ta'en;
The body's caught in raiment as a net.—
Think of the scarlet and the linen fine,
The broidery of wedded gems and gold,
The golden chain. Will you forget them all?

MARGERY.

I can't.

SIR WILFRED.

Then you must ride with me to town.

MARGERY.

Ye—s.

SIR WILFRED.

Or I'll go, and you'll be left to wear
Coarse clothing all your life, and have no play
But watching leaves or pixies at their dance.

MARGERY.

Let me run home and fetch a better frock.

SIR WILFRED.

No; for we'll have you straightway dressed in white,
A-glow with lilies.

MARGERY.

Lilies o' the vale?

SIR WILFRED.

Oh, something larger. Now I claim a kiss.
One, two—she cannot count them, so I'll take
An unrestricted measure.—Come this way.

♪ (Exeunt.)

♪ (Re-enter Fairies.)

FAIRIES.

Silence! on the ground
Set the toadstools round.
Of these mortals twain
We to talk will deign,
Grave and wise,
Till the morning rise.

Scene VI.

Without the Labyrinth. Morning. ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
Enter King Henry and Rosamund. ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

KING HENRY.

♪ SWEET Love, here we must part.

♪ (Taking her hands.)

Oh, brave, unwedded hands, that wear the kiss
Of troth-pledge for their pledge—a pretty bond!
You have the royal seal of a king's lips
At your free service ever.

ROSAMUND.

I am glad

No woman ever spoke to me of love.

It's pure

Only from burning lips.

KING HENRY ♪ (aside.)

Her innocence

Kept the flame golden! ♪ (aloud) I have taught you
well!

My bonnie wood-bird, when I'm at the wars,
I'll lie in my tent and think of the sweet throat
Of the nightingale that swells for me.

♪ (Kissing her throat.)

Once more

You turn! Home, sweeting! This is forwardness
Again to stroke my curls and fondle me.

We've done with parting, if you glisten so,

Unpacking all your sweets before the eyes

That must to fast.

ROSAMUND.

O Henry, could I lie

In the green sunshine and sing soft all day!

The little wood-sorrel and strawberry leaves—

I've smiled to see them twinkling with my tears,

When I have cried for the sound of horse's feet,
And the woodpecker provoked me.
KING HENRY.

What surprise
To find my lady in her midmost bower,
Loosing from silken fillet, knot by knot,
That hair that measures, as I well believe,
My royal stature! When you comb it out,
As the rower from the sea strikes sudden light
With his oar's motion, every crispèd tress
Will shimmer into argent: I shall laugh
To find you silver-haired. Now to my will!
You've wedded a Plantagenet. Seven nights
Keep watch on heaven, for when your couch is
touched
With the first moonbeam, 'tis a sign that night
You lie not lonely.
ROSAMUND.

While I live alone
Let me be free to gossip with the woods.
KING HENRY.
My lady keeps her bower.
ROSAMUND.

What should you fear?
KING HENRY.
Your father will be seeking you.
ROSAMUND.

My lord,
You would not banish me from sight of him,
My fond, old foster-father? He'll ne'er know
I slip away from him. I still must tend
His gentle childishness, and keep my state
When the King rides his forests.

KING HENRY.

By God's Face,
Were it my dearest hound that thus let creep
A minute 'twixt my word and bidding done . . .

ROSAMUND.

I cannot leave my father. He'll not eat
Until I dress his food, and Margery
So negligent. . . .

KING HENRY.

Sir Topaz shall procure

♪ (Enter Margery.)

All comforts for old Michael; trust me, Rose.
Sweetheart, once more farewell.

♪ (Exit King.)

ROSAMUND.

There's Margery;
She'll tell me of my father. What! her cheeks
Are peonies; she looks . . . Where have you been?
Who tricked you in these gauds?

MARGERY ♪ (dancing.)

A knight! all gold
To his horse's knees. It's splendid! You're in white:
How beautiful! But, sister, I've a man
Gave me these pearls, and called 'em mistletoe . . .
A kiss for every one. He's taking me
To London on a palfrey.

♪ (Stopping before Rosamund.)

Rosamund,

Though I'm a child, he's making love to me;
It's like you and the King.

ROSAMUND.

The King—O God!
You've been asleep all night at home!

MARGERY.

No, no;
But never mind! My knight has promised me
A frock all blue with stars. He soon will follow. . . .
Our palfrey had a pebble in its hoof:
And while he stayed to pull it out I peered,
And something glistened; then I jumped down
quick
And saw . . . don't shudder! Rosie, do you live
Inside that shining palace? See, my scarf
Is gayer than the kingcups.

ROSAMUND ♪ (aside.)

A mere child

Playing with fairies!

MARGERY.

Past the cherry-trees
We rode: the moon was like a candle held
To the little slit of light down in our room!
Rosie, I cried to kiss you once, and he—

♪ (Enter Sir Wilfred.)

He's coming—held me firm, blew down my ear,
"You think none naughty but yourself, you elf!
Your sister can play pranks. She sleeps to-night
In a palace with the King." Oh, but it's fine!

ROSAMUND ♪ (aside.)

How can I save her? ♪ (aloud) Child, leave gambol-
ling,

They want to steal and kill you. Take my hand,
♪ (Catching her hand and turning to the
labyrinth.)

Come, see the palace.

SIR WILFRED ♪ (advancing.)

Oh, but pardon me,

That lady is my prize, if you're the King's.

xl

Your little foster-sister has an eye
Of an enchanting wildness. In attire
Becoming that brave skin. . . .

ROSAMUND ♪(gathering Margery in her arms.)
Love, hide your eyes

In my bosom; hush!

♪(To Wilfred.) You shall not touch the child.
The King—his name shall shield her.

SIR WILFRED.

Ay, the King's!

You bear it proudly. You're his mistress—so!
Queen Elinor shall hear of this.

MARGERY ♪(looking up.)

Rose, Rose!

You do not wish that I should see the streets,
And wear grand jewels? I will stay with you.
Don't sob against my heart.

ROSAMUND.

I'll keep the child.

♪(To Margery.) Sister is lonely; stay with her.

SIR WILFRED ♪(to Margery.) You fool!
I'll fetch the Queen, and she will frighten you,
For when she sees your sister, who has kept
The King away, she'll take her by the hair,
And bind it round her till she chokes.

MARGERY.

No, no!

She shall not come.

ROSAMUND.

You have betrayed the child.

MARGERY.

Have I done wrong, dear Rose?

SIR WILFRED ♪(to Rosamund.)

Fair precedent

You've given my audacity. The thing
You call her ruin had been triumph if
The actress were yourself; no more to her
Than trick of a rash goblin. Margery,
You must with me to town: if you are good,
Your sister shall be safe; I will not blab:
But if you do not come, I'll fetch the Queen
To murder her by inches.

MARGERY ♪ (struggling from Rosamund.)

Murder Rose!

I'll strike her in the face. ♪ (to Rosamund.) He is
my man,

And I must follow! Rose, you will be safe,

He'll not offend me. ♪ (Kisses her.)

ROSAMUND ♪ (clasping her & kneeling to
Sir Wilfred.)

For our Lady's sake,

Leave this wild innocence to me. She's torn
Her frock in the briars & laughs. Oh, I have sinned.

MARGERY ♪ (struggling.)

I cannot stay, I dare not vex my man.

♪ (Jumping into Sir Wilfred's saddle.)

Rose, Rose, good-bye.

♪ (Exeunt Sir Wilfred, & Margery waving
her hands.)

ROSAMUND.

And I am bound to him,

The King and my seducer! Oh, he loves—

It is not so he loves me! Margery,

He's hard and cruel—Margery, come back!

☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆ ☆☆
Nothing to see

But a trout leap in the stream.

♪ (Turns to the labyrinth.)

♫ (Enter Sir Topaz.)

SIR TOPAZ.

Ah, there she is!

Mercy! folk about, and my lady outside the walls. Bless the pretty soul, she looks badly. There's been a summer shower on her face. My dear damozel, I must lead you back. 'Tis a strict command I have that you never stray from the door. There's a little garden within, where is broom and what not. Nay, look not so down-hearted. I've planted sunflower and sweet basil against the season.

ROSAMUND.

I'm so bewildered. Where in all this green Starts the way home? I cannot find the track.

SIR TOPAZ.

Straight to the door, straight to the door—that is your home; an' it please you.

(Taking her hand.)

ROSAMUND.

And will you never let me out again?

SIR TOPAZ.

Nay, nay; you'll be happy. And my dear monarch is so full of griefs, I'd rather lose a seat in heaven than put you in peril.

♫ (Exeunt.)

ACT
II

Scene I

Winchester: a terrace
Enter Queen Elinor, Sir Wilfred,
Sir Jose, and Beatrix

QUEEN ELINOR



HE-
N,

WH-
EN?

SIR WILFRED

Have patience, Queen!

QUEEN ELINOR

Patience & Queen!

Thou fool, the words are

mortal enemies,

As much opposed as strength and impotence,
Entreaty and command. I am no queen
Then, when I must be patient; royalty
Allows no pause between the will and deed.
SIR WILFRED.

Pardon!

BEATRIX.

Yet God is patient.

QUEEN ELINOR.

What, my saint?

Patient! God patient! Does He ever pause?
Give me a poison-bowl to mix, a blade
To try the edge of, something to prepare.

BEATRIX.

But God is patient with our sin.

QUEEN ELINOR.

What! lags

In preparation, puts away His wrath,
Takes ease, as you would bid me now, you fools!
Ere we offend, before our sin is hatched,
God has such nimbleness He whets the hunger
Of the dragon that will tear it in our sight.
God never waits His will (wringing her hands.)

To think of it!

At Woodstock, and a home! O Henry, Henry,
You brought me to a place inherited;
For her you built this palace—Rosamund!

SIR WILFRED.

The name? You have it.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Planned the building.—Walk!

Why should we stand! In pausing we grow cold.

♪ (They pace apart.)

♪ (Enter King Henry.)

KING HENRY.

Sons, sons—her constant menace! And she stirs
A troop of boys, with tricks of horsemanship
And set of lips that stamp her nuptial faith,
To mad rebellion. Would she murder them?
She is a desperate woman! Sick at heart
Of all her wrath, passing yon twines of rose,
My wont, I tore a handful of the flowers,
Black, splendid, half-malignant as it seemed,
To throw into her lap, a gift for queens,
My first to her coiled sleeping on her couch.
When presently she woke, she took the flowers
And sobbed, "A happy dream! The sweet, warm
scent!—

For the king kissed me close, and called me Rose";
Then tossed them from her with a stormy hand.
I heard her singing her Provençal songs
For an hour afterwards. Can she suspect?
I dare not try to soften her. She smiles
At a deprecating word, as the sword smiles
In blades of finest temper. I must keep
My majesty.—What news?

♪ (Enter Messenger.)

MESSENGER.

A letter, sire.

KING HENRY ♪ (reads.)

Death-warrant to my heart!—O Rosamund!
I'll bear the news myself. He asks my help.

♪ (To Messenger.)

Hence, and be entertained.

♪ (As Queen Elinor advances.)

What! rebel too,

My tongue!—Read this.

QUEEN ELINOR.

News from the children?

KING HENRY.

Ay,

Your progeny, in arms, war each with each,
In most unnatural combat. Our third son
Prays for our instant help in Aquitaine.
You favour?—

QUEEN ELINOR.

Him who bears thy name and face;

He's my prime warrior.

KING HENRY.

You would greet me, how,

If I returned a conqueror?

QUEEN ELINOR.

With shrieks,

A spectre's welcome.

KING HENRY.

That is darkly said.

I could not slay the first-born of my loins,
Tho' his rebellion merits chastisement.
I trust you with the guidance of my realm:
Be ready for all chance; leave not the gates
Of Winchester. My Queen, the man in you
Will keep my honour safe, while I subdue
Our disobedient offspring. Gentlemen,
Keep revel as our land were not distraught.
I may not tarry longer. Elinor,
Pray, not as wife or mother; pray for peace
To our divided hearts. Farewell!

♫ (Exit.)

SIR WILFRED.

'Tis come!

The moment's ripe—

xlvi

QUEEN ELINOR.

For vengeance and the deed!
SIR WILFRED. ♪ (to Beatrix.)
My fair, you shudder at the thought of blood.
Leave us awhile.

♪ (Exit Beatrix.)

I only know one way
To get the door unlocked.
QUEEN ELINOR.

None but ourself
Must murder her. Oh, I am blind with hate!
You'll lead me by the hand? I could not catch
The thread o' the maze.
SIR WILFRED.

I say there is one way.
Her foster-sister lives within my house,
A common wench, but she will serve our turn.
She shall be taken to her father's hut;
He'll have her back; the hovel is in sight
Of Woodstock and the sylvan labyrinth.
There shall she seek her sister, there grow dear
To jovial Topaz in his lonely hours.
And thus her voice will be our key; to us
He'd double bar the door.

♪ (To Sir Jose.)

She does not mark.

♪ (To Queen Elinor.)

Listen, at Woodstock I prepare the toils.

♪ (To Sir Jose.)

Attend the Queen, until I send you word
To draw her to the precincts of the maze.
Give her a a gipsy's dress, and, thus equipped
Yourself, await the doing of the deed,
With ready horses, just outside the wood.

I will attend her at the beldam's cot
Down by the brook: there shall the poison brew.
SIR JOSE.

And how long hence?

SIR WILFRED.

Some weeks must slip away
Before our plan is ripe for the attempt.

SIR JOSE.

Be not too laggard.

SIR WILFRED.

Look, she's throttling her.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Something at last to do.

SIR WILFRED.

I must prepare

My piece of goods for travel.

♫ (Exeunt Sir Wilfred and Sir Jose.)

QUEEN ELINOR.

If he die

In France, two lovers will be gay in heaven,
And I on earth in hell. He must not die!
When God would hurt, He turns the heart adrift
To cut itself alive among the tombs,
And sets not corpse to corpse; he must not die!

Scene IV.

♣ Woodstock: Forester's hut. ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
Michael, laying faggots together for a fire. ♪ ♪ ♪
MICHAEL.

♣ There's no wench. I can lay the faggots, & maybe stir a little flame. . . . It's growing dark . . . one might almost as well be underground; it's cold, & nothing to smile at. There's no wench, and that means no broth. A dry crust's enough, without a child to break one's bread in the bowl and spice it. To think she could have done it—she—as white as the lily on the pond. But her mother was a slippery thing. Had she been as honest as fair, I had never had the hiding of her babe. And Sir Topaz must come with an air; how Blanche barked at him! "The Lady Rosamund was well; the king had taken her under his protection; had I a message for her?" Well, I told him to mark how the dogs yelped at him, & be gone. The wood's green; it won't kindle.

Mags was the faggot-gatherer, what a wench!
They'd not 'tice her to mischief; she was shrewd;
She milked the goat, and never lolled about;
It's the lying on the grass that leads to sin,
Snapping at flies. I kept Mags at my side;
She knew the pups from birth; she'd work to do
Feeding and training 'em. 'T was a soft hand
Of Rose's, seemed to make you warm at once
The way she led you in. She didn't talk,
And it's a sign of honesty to talk;
That sighing when there's nothing wrong looks ill.
Mag's eyes were wet two days for Blackberry:
Rose stroked my head; she didn't mind the cow;
She hadn't got the sense; but Margery—
A child to lean on, that! just like yourself,
li

With a temper you'd grown used to, knew the rash
At sight, like measles, and could tackle it.
Mags, Mags, what have they done with thee, my
wench!

The fire won't burn! No, no; I'll try again
To stir a flame. She may have lost her way,
And look for the red light about the door.
I'll try.

MARGERY ♪ (Entering.)

Dear father!

MICHAEL ♪ (Hugging Margery.)

Hussy, clear the hearth!

Where have you been, you naughty girl? Oh,
stop . . .

It takes my breath clean out of me. . . . You wait
Till after supper, and I'll beat you blue
For straying in the woods. . . . Just tell me all.

SIR WILFRED ♪ (advancing.)

I found your daughter, Michael, in the glade
Seven nights ago, as I was riding back
To town, in haste, on business of the King's.
I put her on my horse, and kept her safe
In charge of gentle ladies, till to-night,
When I restore her to you with the prayer
You will not let her play among the elves.
The woods are dense, her childish brain confused,
And harm may happen.

MICHAEL.

Humbly thank you, sir.

♪ (To Margery.)

But Margie, all the time you've been away
I've had no broth. Don't cry so; never mind!
Look in my face! You must have seen fine folks,
Fine ladies, in the city; were they kind?

MARGERY.

So kind! . . . O Wilfred, will you go away!

MICHAEL.

You have not combed your hair, a ragged face!
How is it you don't ask for her—"Where's Rose?"

MARGERY.

O father, Rose is safe; she's with the King,
A lady now, and I may visit her.

MICHAEL.

You are not in your woollen frock, and this . . .

SIR WILFRID.

Kind ladies gave it her.

MARGERY.

A lie, a lie!

No ladies gave it me, it was yourself,
You know it was; for, dad, he promised me
Fine clothes to make me wicked. Why, there's
Blanche.

Blanche, Blanche, you'll never know the difference.
She smells too at my frock.

♫ (Jumping down and caressing the dog.)

MICHAEL ♫ (to Wilfred.)

You took the hound

I had no mind to part with; you took her
And spoilt her for my use. I had two maids
I cherished at my fireside, both good girls,
And when I dozed at nights and woke again
They seemed like angels watching me. Ah, Lord!
I shall dream now of fiends. If I could lay
My hands on her! Come here.

MARGERY ♫ (springing to him.)

A blow! . . . I thought

'T was wicked men who loved you struck like that.
Speak to me.

MICHAEL.

Curse you. . . .

SIR WILFRED.

He has lost his wits.

Don't listen to him. Had you held your tongue,
All had gone well. Here, call your dog and come.

MARGERY ♪ (to Sir Wilfred.)

No; I'll leave Blanche with father.

♪ (To Michael.)

Every day

I'll bring you faggots, put them by the door.

I do not want to stay; it's spoiled at home.

How still my father looks. . . . Oh see, he sobs!

Let me go back to him.

♪ (Struggling to escape from Sir Wilfred.)

SIR WILFRED.

He'll strike you dead.

There now, you'll see!

MARGERY ♪ (breaking from Sir Wilfred.)

He's dead. The sweet, grey hair!

Don't snuff so, Blanche. It's better to be dead;

It's safe, like the high shelf I used to climb,

Up out of reach. . . . How very thin his hands!

SIR WILFRED.

Poor Brownie! there, cheer up! Learn not to blab,

And you shall live with Rosamund. No tears!

Kiss me; be good.

MARGERY.

Take me to Rosamund.

♪ (Exeunt.)

Scene V.

♪ Within the Labyrinth. ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
Enter Rosamund and Sir Topaz. ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

ROSAMUND.

♪ He never would have died had I been there.
SIR TOPAZ.

I doubt it. I'm an old man myself. When death once claps you on the shoulder, you must go. Think not of that; think of the King. Perchance he's coming even now through wind and rain.

ROSAMUND.

Fie on me, fie! Is not my father dead?
And Margery . . . and yet the thing I want . . .

SIR TOPAZ.

'Tis a wild night, but the wind cannot find you, so warm and close. Yet there's comfort; one can! The king will be here to-night. And I've taught you to play on the lute, and made you the lady you are, his very queen and idol!

ROSAMUND.

You say he has a queen in Winchester.

SIR TOPAZ.

Now don't wring your hands till they're like the flowers o' bindweed at the droop o' the day. Sit, sit, and I'll tell you of Dame Elinor. She's a woman of black eye and blacker soul, her children benighted from all goodness. She's a snake about the poor king's heart, and they the brood of vipers that sting it within.

ROSAMUND.

And he has never wronged her that she knows.

SIR TOPAZ.

Nay, nay, never. All the hurt is with him. Oh, Lady Rosamund! I've known him stout and red,
lv

with face like a lamp and smiles that came out o' doors
as if from home, and not from a dungeon. It's a
woman's doing, the change. But you'll shake your
tears off and comfort him. Keep your pretty face
dry till he tells you of his broken heart. You may cry
then. Why, I warrant he's here; I must to the bolts
now. Hark!

♪ (Exit Sir Topaz.)

ROSAMUND.

Yes, for the door moves, and I hear the wind.
I am his leman, and I know not how
Bad women feel; I cannot act the part.
I am his Lady and his Love; it were
A mistress' part to meet him with reproach:
I'll be a rose for fragrance, not for thorn.
Alas! when we were lovers, I ne'er asked
What mood my love would like! He's coming!...

♪ (Enter King Henry.)

KING HENRY.

Rose!

ROSAMUND.

O sweet, my lord!

You're sick and weary. Keep the cloudy brow;
Let us be sad together; I've heard say
Green herbs are simple remedies, and so
There may be cure in Rosamund for ills
She wots not of. You come to say Farewell!
I'll bear it, love.

KING HENRY.

God's truth, a Royal Rose!

Though my young vultures famish for my blood,
What matter, if my little Woodstock dove
Coo for her missing mate in widowhood
That tells where love lies bleeding!

lvi

ROSAMUND.

Nay, not so.

I'll with you to the wars.
KING HENRY.

My doughty love!
In the field's disposition, womanhood
Is best in the rear. The soldier must not see
In front the thing he loves; it would perplex;
Imagination of it nerves his hand.
You must not to the field; but day and night
You may besiege the skiey citadel;
I will appoint you captain in that war.
To arms, sweet lips, put off your peaceful use
Of softest kisses, and in prayerful mail
Equip you. But not yet! I'll keep this mouth
That flowers against my cheek for purposes
Most womanly. Shall women fast and pray?
Oh, never in Love's sight; it is contempt
Of his High Majesty. A fearfulness
Possesses me that here you are not safe.
I'll hide you deeper, you sweet-smelling Rose,
For safety with my treasures; you shall have
The custody of my imperilled crown.

ROSAMUND.

Think not of me; but you, my dearest lord,
Give me your griefs to think of when you're gone;
They're dearer than your crown. You go to war...

KING HENRY.

With my own blood; and Elinor—

ROSAMUND.

My lord,
I would not see Dame Elinor, not look
On that which bore you rebels.

KING HENRY.

**Ay, the boy
Who made me father would unmake me king.**

ROSAMUND.

May heaven dishonour him!

KING HENRY.

A royal lad!

**I oft have put the crown upon his head,
And smiled to see his brow confer a grace
On the gold bauble. Be he covetous
Of my grave, that territory shall be his;
He will annex it briefly.**

ROSAMUND.

Give me leave

**To dress my father's grave. I've played the part
You feel the stabbing hurt of. . . .**

KING HENRY.

When I'm dead

**Haply the boy will grieve. Rose, have you lost
Your foster-father?**

ROSAMUND.

He died daughterless.

I hate your rebel son! Go, strike him dead.

There is a grave

Where I will put my hand in Memory's,

Listen her tales and bear the childishness

That doth so oft repeat.

KING HENRY.

Forgive me, love!

I was mistaken babbling of my boy

As you had been his mother.

ROSAMUND.

Rosamund

Could not have borne a traitor.

lviii

KING HENRY.

Ah, my sweet!

If you had borne him, Henry's very self,
The tiny portrait traced in flesh, with all
A woman's delicate imaginings,
Would have been dearer than the King, because
It was the King and Love and Rosamund.
Let us not wrangle: lovers wrangle thus,
Young lovers, who can kiss again next morn.
We're parting; it may be that one of us
Will look upon the other once again.

ROSAMUND.

God help me!

KING HENRY.

Still so far away!

ROSAMUND.

You weep!

KING HENRY.

Oh, parting is the mirror in Death's hand,
Reflex of that immitigable face
Whose glance for ever sunders!

ROSAMUND.

Dear, my lord,

There are some thoughts
That through this stormy weather of my soul
Cannot now travel toward you. Fare you well!

KING HENRY.

What! Lightning in those eyes! A long, long rain
Follows such storms. Farewell!

♫ (Exeunt.)

Scene VI

Without the Labyrinth ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
Enter Margery ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

MARGERY.

Alone! I never felt alone before
I' the country; there was something loving me
In all the green and everywhere about:
But now it makes me shy, so shy. The trees
O' the forest seem to stand aloof, straight up,
An' ask respect, like gentle-folk in town.
An' then . . . the flowers, somehow, are not kind;
They only look at me . . . the marigolds!
But they are in the gardens. . . . Yet I've stopped
At every wild flower, . . . an' they only look.
We were such cronies! Oh, it frightens me!
This is the door; I'll very softly rap,
Lest she should hear. I would not for the world
Catch sight of her. . . . She would be haughty too.

♪ (Knocks.)

SIR TOPAZ ♪ (within.) Who's there? who's
there? Master the Wind, ay, who puts a glove on
his noisy hand to make a fool of me? ♪ (Looking
through a window and then opening.) Bless us!

MARGERY.

Your honour . . .

SIR TOPAZ.

Indeed, good maiden, what would you?

MARGERY.

A basket for the lady—whortleberries;
I gathered 'em this morning i' the dew;
An' if you'd give . . .

SIR TOPAZ.

Very pretty, very pretty! A fresh gift, but bad for

the teeth, assuredly bad. Ho! ho! you've the sweet soot on your lips.

MARGERY.

'Tis from my fingers, for I like them not.

But Ro—I thought . . .

SIR TOPAZ.

A homely fruit! and you've set the sprigs about like nature. Well done! And pray where do you live, my pretty virgin, eh?

MARGERY.

With Mother Greene.

SIR TOPAZ.

Odzookers! With Ellen Greene, the witch, a good girl like you! Why, she's got a black kitten that sucks her under the ear; and they say—mercy on us!—'tis a devil.

MARGERY.

Oh, sir, but I have never seen it suck.

It sits upon her shoulder with large eyes

As yellow as the stars.

SIR TOPAZ.

'Tis Lucifer.

MARGERY.

She calls it Pretty.

SIR TOPAZ.

Tut, my child, you're simple; but, beshrew my heart, you must not live in her stye: her company's vile.

MARGERY.

I have been left with her, and dare not go,

Not for my life. 'Tis better in the day;

But, oh! the dreadful night! I lie an' quake

To hear the purrs and chuckles i' the dark,

Or see the embers spring as green as wheat

lxi

About a hellish pot! The room grows big
And like a church at evening to my eyes.
SIR TOPAZ.

Oh, carry trefoil and pray, Ave Mary! That's a safe prayer. Rove the woods and be merry. 'Tis lonely hereabouts; but never fear! Maids have a watch. Keep at large, and come at your will to me. I've a cup inside, and a bit of honest talk will keep you from further witchcraft. Little sorceress! you've learnt the art as long as it's white and holy. Oh, oh! You set that gay bonnet like a sweet-pea, all flaps. Did Mother Greene teach the charm? Nay, I see! Scholar to your own lesson, and very right! Nature has a pretty way of teaching girls. Why, my lady, bless you! she puts a flower on her bosom as if to grow. Hist! that's her voice! Bring what the woods yield at your will. I'll give the berries to my lady. God be wi' you, lass! ♫ (Exit.)

MARGERY.

It's like old times.

He's natural and does not seem to know,
As the flowers do, and all the men in town.
♫ (Exit.)

Scene VII.

Woodstock: Witch's cottage. 
Enter Sir Wilfred and Ellen Greene. 

SIR WILFRED.

 It's getting late.

GREENE.

An' full o' bats an' owls.

SIR WILFRED.

Your time.

GREENE.

'Tis true, but later of an eve.

The fire is making yonder!

 (Goes apart.)

SIR WILFRED.

Margie's gone

To catch old Topaz in her artless net

Of prattle! 'Twas by very providence

I visited the silly chuck at last.

So many days and she had scarcely moved

One step toward the fulfilment of my plan.

The hussy tires me with her drooping ways,

The little Autumn! She's dispiriting,

And makes me an old sinner with her sighs.

What tall, gaunt woman comes across the path!

A wolf, a prowling creature! Ah, the Queen!

She has no patience.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Take me to the maze.

See here's the fire-tipped blade!

SIR WILFRED.

But you mistake.

We have no thread but Margery's young voice.

The girl is now with Topaz, making friends.

To-morrow night—

lxiii

GREENE *♩* (advancing.)

Eh, are there two of us?
Pardie, there's magic in the hem of the robe.
Good faith! I tremble at her!

SIR WILFRED.

Goodie, here!

She needs a cup, the poison I bespoke,
Against to-morrow evening.

GREENE.

I have plucked
The berries. Lack-a-day! I only played
With wonders; for a poor soul must not die!
I frightened the young girls and got their pence.
Why, sir, that lass of yours, this blessed eve
She'll have a bath o' dew beneath the moon,
To comfort her.

SIR WILFRED.

Humph! devilish penitence!

GREENE.

But, Lord! I never sold me to the fiend;
Belike he's come to fetch me. Don't you go;
It must be secret. Kindly stay about,
Good sir.

QUEEN ELINOR.

I cannot bide another night.
My brain grows hot; 'twill scorch my sense. The
king
Returns from conquest. She will crown him, she!
Get access quickly. Ah, I fear my hand
Can scarce strike steady. Get the poison mixed;
My will is firm, and I can force her drink.
Sir Wilfred, there's a heart to stop, ere night;
The king is landing.

SIR WILFRED:

I'll seek Margery;
Watch you the draught a-brewing. I'll return.

♫ (Exit.)

♫ (Queen Elinor flings herself on a bench.)

GREENE.

Beyond me, quite beyond me, a blue spirit
That's smelt at sulphur. My poor cat is grey
Pretty! . . . There's sort o' chains about the air.
Lord, if I'm not afraid!

QUEEN ELINOR.

To do my will?

GREENE.

What is it?

QUEEN ELINOR.

To make death.

GREENE.

Once on a time

I sent a lover pining to his grave,
As thus: I pinched a candle to his shape,
So like, it made you start; and by the fire
I kept it dropping.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Fill your caldron, come!

GREENE.

I'm shredding vipers' flesh.

QUEEN ELINOR.

I have my knife;

I'll help.

GREENE.

A man to murder?

QUEEN ELINOR.

No; a girl.

GREENE.

lxv

i

Bless us! D'ye see that flying thing with blood
I' the trail of it—a shroud! and at the breast . . .

QUEEN ELINOR.

Old, crazy brain, her ghost will comfort me.

GREENE.

Nay, to be haunted! Lady, look ye here!
There's safer ways. I'll give you this will make
Any one love you, and be mad for you.

QUEEN ELINOR.

You can? Nay, nay, I must not be a fool.
Pass that! Henceforth on hatred I must feed—
To be hated more and more, and more to hate.
What's that in the pot?

GREENE.

It's henbane!

QUEEN ELINOR.

Wherefore cook

Your wretched broth? This phial will suffice.

♫ (Snatching at phial.)

GREENE.

Not that, not that! It will not do the thing.

QUEEN ELINOR.

All's ready! . . . Ah, it presses inwardly,
Like the full breast undrained by thirsty lips.
I've borne the load of an unlonged-for heart:
It stifles less than the burthen of damned hate.

♫ (Re-enter Sir Wilfred with Margery.)

MARGERY.

Who's this?

QUEEN ELINOR.

I am . . .

SIR WILFRED.

Listen: the lady here

Is Rose's mother. She was lost, you know;

lxvi

Now she is come and longs to see her child.
She has no patience. Twenty years away!
MARGERY.

Oh, she looks poor and hungry. I am glad
Sir Topaz said I might come any hour.

SIR WILFRED.

Then you shall be our guide, and with your voice
Call the good gentleman to let us in.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Give me this Rose, I say!

MARGERY.

I do not think

She's gentle; may be she will strike at Rose.

WILFRED.

She's angry with the king who shut her up.

QUEEN ELINOR ♪ (taking Margery firmly by
the hand.)

Go straight; I am her mother.

MARGERY.

Oh, I feel

As there were thunder in her; I'm afraid!

Scene, VIII.

♪ Labyrinth. ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
Rosamund pacing the room. Clear moonlight. ♪

ROSAMUND.

♪ White moon, art thou the only visitant?
Thou look'st like death!

Dost glisten through the trees
My Henry bows his plumes to in the gloom?
He comes to-night; for good Sir Topaz said,
"My lady, put you on the crimson gown
The king had wrought for you, and ask no more,
But be you ready." It's a silver night;
I'll put me out apparel. How blood-red
Burn the dark folds! I cannot put it on.
What is it that I want—God or the King?

♪ (Sings.)

Love doth never know
Why it is beloved,
And to ask were treason;
Let the wonder grow!
Were its hopes removed,
Were itself disproved
By cold reason,
In its happy season
Love would be beloved.

♪ (Laying down her lute.)

No; it hurts sharper. I must just sit down
On the edge of the bed, and comb my hair and
wait;

I cannot think at all.

♪ (Letting fall her hair.)

How beautiful
This rippling gold made silver by the moon.
Would Heaven age me for my love!

lxviii

'Tis thus,
Even thus, he swore that he should come to me,
His very words, the prophecy fulfilled!
I'll comb my hair down to my very feet.
A step—my heart, some patience! Henry, speak,
Bid it take courage, dearest!
♪ (Enter Queen Elinor.)

God, the Queen!

QUEEN ELINOR.

The Queen, who gives you access to your God,
The wife who dooms the leman, Elinor,
Come to put bitter poison in the cup
The King drinks deep of. Never tremble so:
I'll do naught hastily. Give me your face
To lay between my hands, and drink my fill
Of the rich beauty I must violate.
Look in my face! Death's very self were yellow
To the blanch of your lips. Do not mistake me,
girl;
This dagger or this cup is for your use:
I will not harm you.

♪ (Aside.)

What a curl of the lash!

Have you once thought of me these many days,
Queen, wife, and mother, and the thing you are?
Old age is heir
Apparent to the majesty of death,
And thought of the impending royalty
Softens the manners, and should awe the heart
Of youth, that churl of nature!

ROSAMUND.

I'll not stay

For any prayers; only remove your eyes
From off my soul! I will repay the debt.

lxix

This blood . . .

♪ (Stabbing herself.)

An earnest of the red gold from my heart,
Take it . . . and do for my dead flesh the things
A mother would entreat.

♪ (Dies.)

QUEEN ELINOR.

Sooth to my will!

And she died prettily.

MARGERY

♪ (bursts in, followed by Sir Wilfred.)

Where's Rosamund?

QUEEN ELINOR.

Warm, at my feet.

MARGERY.

Then you have murdered her?

And Topaz murdered! Rose!

SIR WILFRED.

My Queen, to horse!

The King is coming, and the parchment's writ

We'd make him reader of. Plantagenet

Best spend his first, wild fury on the dead.

Quick, by this passage.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Would that I were here

To chronicle his face! Give me your hand!

This roof will break my brow. I've made my lord

A bridal bed, a royal recipe

For slighted wives. All's ready for him. Come!

♪ (Exeunt.)

MARGERY ♪ (kneeling by Rosamund's corpse.)

What is it that sucks the air from the room? An'

I dare not go back, for the sweet, old man is dead.

It's worse than the dark, for she stares. I never mind-

lxx

ed Rose looking. . . . They use coin. I've got some pieces of the silver left. I'll do it before I'm wild. But I shouldn't like the money there when I die. No. My hand! She's looking softer now.

♪ (Raising her head at the sound of foot-steps.)

O Rose, Rose! Now I'll see what they do when we're dead who say fine things to us.

SIR WILFRED ♪ (re-entering.)

Did I not bid you follow, little fool!

Leave you for witness, sooth! Gag up your mouth.

♪ (Pausing before Rosamund.)

A royal morsell!

♪ (Margery stabs him.)

MARGERY.

'Twas the look he gave
At Rosamund's white breast. I'm used to it.
He may look so at me! It trickles down,
The blood upon his cheeks and clots his hair,
The big, black curls. I can't have hurt him much!
Wilfred! I love him, love him; be alive,
And strike and curse me! I've so swart a skin,
The yellow bruises hardly show; but he—
He's growing deadly white.

SIR WILFRED ♪ (aside.)

A wench's thrust,

And mortal! Little drab!

♪ (Aloud.)

You will be hanged,

I tell you, in the city. Men will hoot
And jeer at you; and say, "A slut like that,
To lay her hands upon a gentleman!"
The king will have you hanged tight by your neck—
You hear?—till you are dead.

MARGERY.

Don't bleed so fast!

Wilfred! Oh, kill me first, I can't be hanged;
Have you not strength to kill me?

SIR WILFRED.

Reach that bowl.

♪ (She drinks.)

Don't stagger here to die; go further off!

MARGERY.

Oh, kiss me! . . . Do not die! . . . It's horrible,
The cold inside.

SIR WILFRED.

She's lying in a heap.

Either my brain is sick from loss of blood,
Or here's a spectre king. How hoary pale!

(The King enters staggering and stands before Rosamund's corpse.)

KING HENRY.

Blood all the way, there is no other clew,
Her blood, on to the centre . . . and we meet
So, in Death's sovereignty. I have no fear
To chill this little hand, so soft it strikes
The ice, here at my heart. Oh, this is murder,
And I have knelt in penance for no crime.
I left thee angered. Love, again thine eyes
That I may read my pardon! Love, 'tis there
'Tis graven, but I may not break the seal;
Before the funeral the eyes are buried.
Thy lips—already is the tender mouth
A rosy marble to the memory
Of all past kisses. Lovely portraiture
That young desire beholding ages slow,
And turns from with the dull pace of regret.
Her lute—O God, there's life about the strings;

lxxii

Her spirit touched it!

♫ (Looking round discovers Sir Wilfred.)
SIR WILFRED ♫ (to Margery, who groans.)

Peace!

KING HENRY ♫ (going to Sir Wilfred.)

Confess your deed,

And for your soul I'll never cease to pray
That God may damn it deeper every hour.

Unkennel!

SIR WILFRED.

Sire, that child, suspecting me
Of the Queen Elinor's most base revenge,
Struck at me with the yet warm-blooded sword:
Now end her work.

MARGERY.

Stop, stop! This gentleman
Is kind to me, he never did me harm.

'Twas the tall lady with the knife . . . and this,

♫ (Lifting the poison bowl.)

I drank it off; if you will wait, I'll die.

Don't hang me! Pretty Rosamund, I'd like

To have seen her crowned. Give her a handsome
tomb

In the middle of the church, and bury me

Out in the grass. I'm but a common girl,

And she a lady.

♫ (Dies.)

SIR WILFRED.

You've your paramour
To answer for; I mine. I killed that wench
For slashing at me; and 'tis like enough
Your lady rent her body at command
Of majesty. What will not ladies do
For monarchs' pleasure—eh?

KING HENRY.

What lips God sets
To his chalice-cups of love! What drink He gives
To foulest mouths! Is there comparison
Betwixt our deeds? From this slain innocence
I wince not, for I worshipped. You, I swear
By the lost childhood of that cheek, defiled.
SIR WILFRED.

We had our pleasure the forbidden way,
Each after his own fashion. For the rest,
I bleed to death; it's painless.

KING HENRY.

You shall have
A leech, a cunning one. My men shall bear
Your body in a litter to your bride,
With word from me how honourable your hurt;
And if in hate she spurn you from her door,
Or if she tend you with cold eyes, 'tis well.

♫ (Sir Wilfred swoons.)

He swoons.

♫ (Turning to Rosamund.)

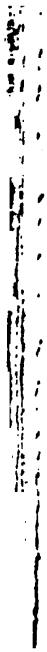
Heaven favours me to give my Love
A private audience. They have pulled about
Our bower, sweet Rose; but there's a holy spot
At Goddeshill, where, 'mid the sisterhood
Of blessèd nuns, I'll rear a stately shrine.
What need? . . . Death's labyrinth
None threads. Ah, Rosa Mundi, thou
That wert to the king a tender sweet-brier rose,
They've shed thy petals; all thy balmy leaves
Lie crushed against my heart. And what regret?
Without thee I had plunged for solitude
I' the murk of hell; and without me, my Life,
Thy spirit had ne'er worn love's purple robes.

lxxiv

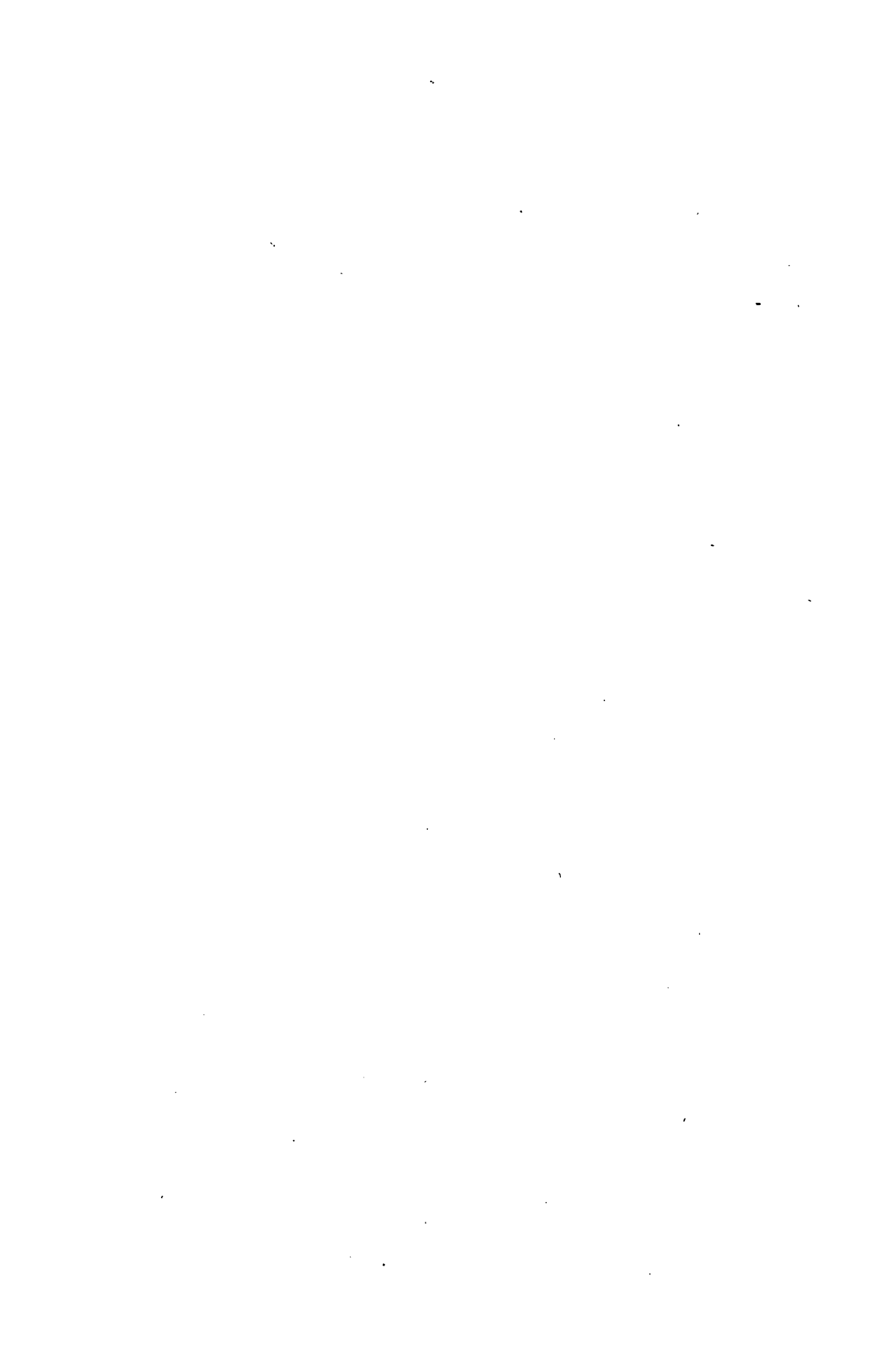
Let's cover thee ♪ (Sir Wilfred stirs.)
From this base sight—My sweet, how well thou
know'st
'Tis the first time
Lust hath breathed near thee—cover thee, until,
'Fore God and all His glistening righteousness,
I shall re-claim thee, body, ay, and soul.

✦ HERE ENDS FAIR ROSAMUND,
BY MICHAEL FIELD. THE DECO-
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ON THE WOOD BY CHARLES RIC-
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